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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ATTITUDES OF CLIENTS AND COUNSELLORS TOWARD THE EDMONTON FAMILY COURT CONCILIATION PROJECT

(C)

by

JUDITH EMILY BEACH

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Attitudes of Clients and Counsellors Toward the Edmonton Family Court Conciliation Project submitted by Judith Emily Beach, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Counselling and School Psychology.

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ABSTRACT

A sharp increase in the number of divorces in Canada was one of the results of the enactment of the revisions of the Divorce Act in 1968. A serious need was recognized for facilities within the legal system which would combine social and legal services in making available constructive alternatives to separation and divorce to families, which would help to strengthen family relationships. The Edmonton Family Court Conciliation Project was established as a demonstration project to provide such a service to couples whose marital problems had brought them into contact with the legal system. It was intended to provide brief and intensive counselling which was focussed on the disrupting crisis of the couple involved.

The purposes of this study were to describe the distribution of the clients of the Project according to various demographic classifications, to assess the clients' satisfaction with the counselling they had received, to investigate the relationship of the client variables and reported satisfaction, and to summarize the counsellors' attitudes toward the Project. Information regarding the clients' attitudes was obtained by mailing questionnaires to all clients who, according to Project records, had attended at least one interview at the Project between November 16, 1972 and May 28, 1974. The counsellors also completed questionnaires containing questions relevant to their attitudes.

Of the total number of clients who were assumed to be eligible to respond to the mailed questionnaires, 28 per cent of them returned completed forms. Cautious interpretation of the results was necessary because these data could not be assumed to be representative of all of the clients who had received counselling at the Project. However, the results

suggested that a large proportion of the respondents were young, and had been married a relatively short time. Many reported having sought counselling prior to coming to the Project, and almost half of them had three or more children. The results also suggested that significantly more respondents reported satisfaction rather than dissatisfaction with the counselling they received at the Project.

The Project counsellors' responses to their questionnaire seemed to indicate that their individual goals were largely congruent with those of the organization. Although they seemed generally satisfied with their jobs, they expressed some concern regarding the perceived inflexibility of the organizational structure, and the demands placed upon counsellors who worked in both the Project and the Family Court.

Implications of the results for the Project's functioning, and for post-secondary education, were discussed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		Page
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	1. The Nature of the Problem	1
	2. Background of the Study	7
	3. Limitations of the Study	8
	4. Organization of the Study	9
II	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	11
	1. Divorce and Conciliation in a Cross-Cultural Context	11
	2. Family Courts in Canada and the United States	14
	3. Edmonton Family Court Conciliation Project	17
III	DESIGN AND PROCEDURE	20
	1. The Sample	20
	2. The Instrument	21
	3. Administration of the Questionnaire	24
	4. The Counsellor Questionnaire	26
	5. Analysis of the Data	26
IV	RESULTS	28
	1. Introduction	28
	2. Characteristics of the Respondents	28
	3. Clients' Reported Satisfaction	32
	4. Client Variables and Amount of Satisfaction	34
V	INTERPRETATION, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	42
	1. Interpretation and Summary	42
	2. Recommendations	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY		47
APPENDICES		51

CHAPTER Page

Appendix A..... 52

Appendix B..... 58

Appendix C..... 65

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Ia	NUMBER OF DIVORCES, CANADA AND ALBERTA.....	3
Ib	DIVORCE RATES PER 100,000 POPULATION, CANADA AND ALBERTA.....	3
II	PERCENTAGES OF MALES AND FEMALES IN SAMPLE RESPONDING TO QUESTIONNAIRE.....	29
III	PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO AGE.....	30
IV	PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO LENGTH OF MARRIAGE.....	31
V	PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF CHILDREN.....	32
VI	FREQUENCY OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING GREATER AND LESS SATISFACTION.....	33
VII	SEX AND AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS.....	35
VIII	AGE GROUP AND AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS.....	35
IX	PREVIOUS COUNSELLING AND AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS.....	36
X	LENGTH OF MARRIAGE AND AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS.....	37
XI	NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS.....	37

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Nature of the Problem

The revisions of Canada's Divorce Act, enacted effective July 2, 1968, significantly increased the grounds for divorce. Prior to this time, adultery had been the sole legal rationale for divorce in Canada. The newly accepted grounds were classified under two headings: "Matrimonial offences" and "marriage breakdown". The matrimonial offences exist where the respondent:

1. has committed adultery;
2. has been guilty of sodomy, bestiality or rape, or has engaged in a homosexual act;
3. has gone through a form of marriage with another person; or,
4. has treated the petitioner with physical or mental abuse as to render intolerable the continued cohabitation of the spouses. (Divorce Act, 1968, Section 3)

The grounds for divorce under the heading of "marriage breakdown" are as follows:

1. imprisonment for an aggregate of not less than three years in the five years immediately preceding presentation of the petition;
2. imprisonment for at least two years immediately preceding presentation of the petition following conviction of an offence for which the respondent was sentenced to death or imprisonment for ten years or more, provided that all appeals against conviction or sentence have been exhausted;
3. gross addiction of the respondent to alcohol or a narcotic drug for not less than three years immediately preceding

presentation of the petition, with no reasonable expectation of rehabilitation in the reasonably forseeable future;

4. disappearance of the respondent for not less than three years immediately preceding presentation of the petition, provided that the petitioner has no knowledge of or information about the respondent and been unable to locate the respondent during that period;

5. non-consummation of the marriage for a period of not less than one year, where the respondent has been unable by reason of illness, disability or refusal, to consummate the marriage;

6. where the spouses have been living separate and apart for not less than three years immediately preceding presentation of the petition, or living separate and apart for at least five years if the petitioner deserted the respondent. (Divorce Act, 1968, Section 5)

As Kronby (1972) points out, by far the majority of the cases which come to court have as grounds adultery, cruelty and separation.

The implications of these legal reforms included a drastic increase in the numbers of divorce cases being handled by the legal system. The impact of the reforms are illustrated in Table Ia.

TABLE Ia

NUMBER OF DIVORCES, CANADA AND ALBERTA

Year	Canada	Alberta
1968	11,343	1,916
1969	26,093	3,446
1970	29,775	3,771
1971	29,626	3,652

TABLE Ib

DIVORCE RATES PER 100,000 POPULATION, CANADA AND ALBERTA

Year	Canada	Alberta
1968	54.8	125.7
1969	124.2	221.0
1970	139.8	236.4
1971	137.4	224.3

Since the divorce "decree nisi" is usually not made absolute by the divorce court until three months after the initiation of the divorce petition, the impact of the 1968 reforms had little effect on the number of divorces granted in that year. This is because very few petitions filed under the new legislation would have been heard and the final decree (decree absolute) granted between July 2 and the end of the calendar year (Canada Year Book, 1972). However, as shown in Table Ib, the impact of the new legislation became evident in 1969, when the national divorce rate more than doubled. Alberta's divorce rate jumped from 125.7 per 100,000 population in 1968 to 221.0 in 1969. In fact, as

is noted in the Canada Year Book (1972), Alberta and British Columbia have consistently had the highest divorce rates among the provinces.

The statistical increases in divorces in Canada emphasized the growing need for facilities within the legal system which would provide for conciliation services as an alternative to separation and divorce. Traditionally, the legal processes have been ill-suited and inadequate in the litigation of marital and family conflicts, with the effects of weakening and destroying family relationships. Sections 7 and 8 of the Divorce Act require inquiry by judges and lawyers as to the feasibility of marital reconciliation of the parties involved. Section 7 states, in part:

> It shall be the duty of every barrister, soliciter, lawyer or advocate who undertakes to act on behalf of a petitioner or a respondent on a petition for divorce under this Act ... (a) to draw to the attention of his client those provisions of this Act that have as their object the effecting where possible of the reconciliation of the parties to a marriage; (b) to inform his client of the marriage counselling or guidance facilities known to him that might endeavour to assist the client and his or her spouse with a view to their possible reconciliation; and (c) to discuss with his client the possibility of the client's reconciliation with his or her spouse. (Divorce Act, 1968, Section 7)

As noted by Reagh (1970), this provision has been dealt with in a perfunctory way by both lawyers and judges. In his opinion, this is probably justified to some extent because by the time a divorce action is initiated in Canada, the marriage is likely to have been beyond repair for a long time. He also observes that community agencies, in many cases, have been reluctant to extend their services to couples with such poor prognoses, while lawyers appear to be even more reluctant to refer cases to marriage counselling services. As an example, Marcus (1968) reports that only fourteen of about 1,000 families given marriage

counselling by the Calgary Family Service Bureau were referred by lawyers.

While it may be true that community family service agencies may have close working relationships with judicial and legal agencies and personnel in some areas, they have no active link with divorce jurisdictions. Hence, with this separation of legal and social services, the lawyer is consulted only after the marriage has become a terminal case, and the husband and wife are committed to divorce by the time they enlist his or her aid (Reagh, 1970). Furthermore, many of the clients who require counselling services are unable to afford the agencies' fees. The usually heavy case load of community agencies necessitates a long interval between time of referral, initial interview, and commencement of therapy, which is a significant consideration in family crisis situations.

At a more general level, there has been a growing social awareness of the economic burden which separated families constitute for communities, and of the responsibility and the opportunities which the legal system has for coping with this social and economic problem. As early as 1958, the American Bar Association stressed that

> "...what must be made plain to the taxpayer is that the total cost of the administration of justice is no more than a drop in the bucket of national or state expense - and further, that the cost of the present divorce system, in terms of human tragedy has become too high to be tolerated any longer."

Other countries, notably the United States (Olson, 1970; Reagh, 1970), Japan (Naito, 1969) and New Zealand (Inglis, 1969), have established facilities to offer counselling to litigants, and have reported beneficial results.

There appears to be a serious need, therefore, for the establishment of facilities within the legal system which would combine social and legal services in making available to families constructive alternatives

to separation and divorce which would contribute to strengthening family relationships. These services must be readily available to the clients without imposing undue financial burdens on them, and with minimal delays between the time of referral and actual initiation of counselling.

The Family Court Conciliation Project was established in Edmonton as a demonstration project in response to these needs, with the purpose of testing the feasibility of such a service as described above. Its general goals are to reconciliate where possible and to aid such families in acquiring means to function more effectively; to conciliate continuing differences; to refer clients with more serious problems such as alcoholism and drug addiction to appropriate agencies; to offer counselling to aid divorced clients in coping with the implications and practical problems of their new status; to help to decrease the emotional and financial impact of marriage breakdown; and to offer alternatives to divorce (Edmonton Family Court Conciliation Project Society, 1972).

As Ackerman (1966, 1970) notes, a pervasive shift is occurring in attitudes toward psychotherapy. The concepts of social science and psychotherapy are becoming intermeshed, and the rapidly growing field of family therapy is an area in which this combination of perspectives is especially clear. This developing awareness of the possibilities for treatment of the difficulties of married couples and their children in a psychological and sociological setting is seen in the development of several approaches to marriage counselling and family therapy in the past decade. Some of these approaches are Brodey's (1963) cybernetic approach, Satir's (1967) conjoint family therapy, and approaches such as those of Dreikurs (1970) and Gordon (1970), which emphasize parent-

child interaction. The framework adopted by the Conciliation Project counsellors was that of transactional analysis, as described by Harris (1967).

2. Background of the Study

A concrete proposal to establish the Edmonton Family Court Conciliation Project was initiated in February, 1972, and a grant to carry out the project was approved by the Department of National Health and Welfare for the fiscal year 1972-73 in September, 1972. This project was undertaken within the existing Family Court structure, the conciliation services being an added dimension to the regular duties of the court staff.

In May, 1973, Dr. J.G. Paterson of the Department of Educational Psychology and Dr. J.C. Hackler of the Department of Sociology at the University of Alberta were appointed by the Welfare Grants Directorate as evaluators of the Edmonton Family Court Conciliation Project. The broad objectives of this evaluation project were to clarify the role of the Conciliation Project through various data-gathering devices, and to provide recommendations regarding the current status of the Project, with further suggestions for change.

This study was a part of the larger evaluation project undertaken by Dr. Hackler and Dr. Paterson. The purposes of this study were as follows:

I. To describe the distribution of the respondents according to the following demographic classifications:

1. sex;
2. age;
3. length of marriage;
4. whether previous counselling had been received;

5. number of children;

6. number of times the individual had been married.

II. To assess the amount of satisfaction as reported by clients with the services received at the Conciliation Project.

III. To investigate the relationship of the client variables and the amount of satisfaction with the services received as reported by clients, as follows:

1. Reported satisfaction of male clients as related to that of female clients;

2. Reported satisfaction according to clients' age groups;

3. Reported satisfaction of clients who received counselling prior to coming to the Conciliation Project related to that of clients who did not receive counselling previously;

4. Reported satisfaction according to number of years clients had been married;

5. Reported satisfaction according to number of children clients had.

IV. To summarize the attitudes of the counsellors toward the functioning of the Conciliation Project.

3. Limitations of the Study

Provisions for evaluation were not a part of the Project plans at its outset. Hence, no baseline data were available for comparison purposes, and the evaluation necessarily assumed a format which is descriptive of the situation as it existed during the process of the evaluation. The Conciliation Project is predominantly oriented toward rendering a social service to its clientele, and is not directed toward fulfilling research objectives. Therefore, it was necessary for the

research personnel to adapt to the flexible nature of such a social action project, with a resulting loss in rigor of approach. However, such a non-experimental approach had advantages in this situation as well, since a descriptive approach lent itself well to an investigation of the process of the project, rather than being limited merely to inputs and outputs.

The primary data-gathering instrument employed in this study was a mailed questionnaire. Because a low return rate had been anticipated, questionnaires were mailed to all clients for whom addresses were available, in order to obtain the most complete data possible. Certain difficulties in interpretation of the data were presented, however, and the information gained from respondents could not necessarily be assumed to be representative of the total sample.

Furthermore, the clients' responses were by definition determined by subjective biases, and caution must be exercised in inferring actual effectiveness of the Project services from the clients' reported perceptions.

4. Organization of the Study

The major sources of information about the functioning of the Family Court Conciliation Project were the clients and the counsellors. Questionnaires were mailed to a total of 835 individuals, most of whom had attended at least one interview with a project counsellor. These questionnaires were designed to obtain demographic data about the sample, and to elicit responses regarding their attitudes toward the services provided by the Project. In an effort to gain a further understanding of the Project personnel's perceptions of the Project's services and their roles, the counsellors who were involved in the Project were

requested to answer a series of questions pertinent to the study's objectives.

Following the introduction regarding the background and purposes of this study in Chapter I, a review of the literature, with emphasis on the operation of conciliation programs within the court systems of other countries, was discussed in Chapter II. Chapter III contained a discussion and description of the design of the study and the methods of collecting data. Chapter IV contained an analysis of the data gathered, and a summary of the nonstatistical information which was derived in the process of the study. A summary of the results, their implications and major trends were presented in Chapter V, along with recommendations for possible change in the Project.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

1. Divorce and Conciliation in a Cross-Cultural Context

Published reports of assessments of the effectiveness of conciliation court counselling services were extremely scarce. Of the limited research which was available, much of it resembled that published by the Superior Court of Los Angeles County in its annual report on the Conciliation Court. This report compiles data such as the number of cases handled, number of reconciliations and sources of referral. It also contains summaries of the rationale for their services, and the development of various programs. However, a survey of the literature yielded no accounts of research which had undertaken to gather information regarding either clients' or counsellors' attitudes toward conciliation counselling services. However, in order to provide a basis for comparison with the Edmonton Family Court Conciliation Project, the divorce and conciliation procedures of three other countries were briefly discussed. These countries, Japan, Sweden, and New Zealand, were chosen because they represent rather diverse ideologies.

Japan

A divorce in Japan typically comes about by mutual agreement, and it could be considered the counterpart of marriage (Rheinstein, 1972). Both marriage and divorce become legal simply by the notification of the local government having custody of the family register of the parties concerned. Ordinarily when two people agree to terminate their marriage they also agree about child custody and the payment to be made by one party to the other, usually by the husband to the wife, and constituting a combination

of property agreement and support for a usually short period of transition (Zaisen-bunyo). If the parties have agreed that the marriage shall be terminated but have not reached agreement on all or some of the side issues, either party may apply to the family court to bring about a settlement.

In cases where one party does not agree to the divorce or to the terms proposed, the party wishing to bring an action for divorce must apply for conciliation proceedings in the Family Court before doing so. Conciliation proceedings are conducted by the conciliation committee, which consists of a judge and at least two conciliation commissioners, one of whom is usually a woman. These commissioners are members of the general public who are nominated by the Family Court on the basis of their "social conscience and moral spirit" (Naito, 1969). The committee seeks to help the parties understand their difficulties and to deal with each other in a mature manner. Both parties are involved in talks, separately or together, and others who may be involved, such as in-laws, are called in when necessary. The committee tries to induce the parties to reach an agreement regarding either reconciliation or a divorce settlement.

Sweden

Although the marital relationship is ideally viewed as permanent in the Nordic countries, it is also recognized that attempts to legally enforce this permanency are futile (Rheinstein, 1972). The principal ground for divorce is the factual breakdown of the marriage, as evidenced by separation for one year if the parties are in agreement, and three years otherwise. The parties filing for divorce must also present to the court a certificate from a pastor or conciliator signifying that they

had attempted reconciliation, but had been unsuccessful. Clergymen frequently fill this role, but secular conciliators are provided by the city and district administrations for those who have no church affiliations. However, few secular or church conciliators have specialized training, and marriage counselling is not a recognized and organized profession in Sweden as yet. In Rheinstein's (1972) opinion, the compulsory attempts at conciliation have helped to inhibit hastily considered divorces. However, the law is rather vague about the role of the conciliator, which states that his or her goal is to reconcile the parties, but does not include the task of advising people about coping with problems such as child custody and property settlement if a reconciliation is not brought about.

New Zealand

Inglis (1969) reports that in New Zealand much of the court's work in the area of matrimonial disputes is concerned with the separation or non-cohabitation order, rather than divorce cases. The legally-recognized separation in itself provides a ground for divorce when it has been in effect for two years. New Zealand has largely abandoned, in practice, the adversary system of divorce proceedings, and the role of the courts in such cases is to enquire and receive information which is deemed relevant. According to the revisions of the Family Court system, which were instituted in 1970, it is possible for a client to apply to the court for conciliation even when no separation or divorce proceedings have been initiated. Hence, the Court is involved in attempting to save marriages before they have deteriorated too much, and the emphasis is on conciliation and counselling. Such cases are referred to a counsellor, and there are legal provisions which give him or her the power to require

the attendance of the other spouse at conciliation conferences. In situations in which a separation order or divorce action is sought, the couple is automatically referred to the conciliation facilities. The counsellor, if unable to effect a reconciliation, then helps the couple in establishing settlements in such issues as property and child custody.

2. Family Courts in Canada and the United States

As early as 1925, all but two of the states in the United States had established juvenile courts, and the concept of the family court grew out of the philosophy upon which juvenile courts were based (Zukerman, 1969). The purpose of the juvenile court was rehabilitation, rather than punishment, of persons whose problems brought them into contact with the courts. It was recognized that cases arising from family disputes require a type of treatment and attention not available in traditional legal procedures, and a conciliatory approach gradually replaced the traditional adversary approach. The social, as well as the legal aspects of such cases received much attention, and the members of the family court staff and the associated community social service agencies have an important role in helping families to work toward their own solutions. Prior to the establishment of family courts, juvenile courts were responsible for juvenile offences, and domestic relations courts had jurisdiction over family problems, with the exception of matters involving the status of marriage.

There is no nation-wide divorce law in the United States as there is in Canada. Each state has its own divorce laws, and conciliation facilities operate within the framework of prevailing state laws. In Canada, and in most of the states of the United States, the family courts have no jurisdiction over divorce, even though divorce involves, very frequently, the dissolution of the family unit. In Canada, the functions of the family

court vary somewhat among provinces, but divorce cases are handled by the provincial supreme courts. They are the subject matter of civil law, and litigation involves the application of an adversary approach. Fudge (1970) states that the exclusion of divorce from the jurisdiction of the family court is a major shortcoming. Foster (1966) attributes this limitation of the family court's power to the conservatism of the bar and courts which refuse to relinquish certain areas of their jurisdiction to the family court. However, as Fudge reports, the attorneys and courts with conservative leanings are not merely trying to impede progress. Rather, they are of the opinion that since marriage is a legally-sanctioned contract, any attempt to dissolve this contract should be handled within a court whose jurisdiction is concerned solely with the legal aspect of the dissolution and distribution of property accrued during the life span of the contract. It is felt that the court does not have a place in making remediation attempts if a married couple could not solve their own problems (Fudge, 1970).

However, there appears to be a significant movement toward an integrated family court system, which would handle all justiciable family problems, including divorce (Fudge, 1970; Alexander, 1952; Foster, 1966; Reagh, 1970). Reagh (1970) reports that almost all of the family courts operating in the United States feature some type of reconciliation procedure, although only a few of these have integrated jurisdiction over both marital disputes and child care.

Following is a brief description of two established systems in the United States which are frequently mentioned in the literature as applications of some of the theory of integrated family court systems.

Toledo, Ohio

Reagh (1970) describes the Domestic Relations Court of Toledo, Ohio as a fully integrated court, which has successfully combined the juvenile court jurisdiction with that of domestic relations, hence having jurisdiction over divorce cases. The role of the counsellor is seen as crucial in the court's operation, and the goal of the counsellor is primarily to reconciliate where possible, and to assist in working out matters such as property settlement and child custody where reconciliation is not possible. Interviews with counsellors are prescribed by law for divorcing couples with children under fourteen, with the goal of establishing more satisfactory settlements in matters relating to the welfare of the children. This service is optional for parents of children who are over fourteen. Counsellors play an important role in making information available to the court, and have wide access to prior records of social service agencies. However, the clients' consent and participation is required in order that these records be consulted, and the information presented in court.

Los Angeles, California

In contrast to the Toledo system, the jurisdiction of the Conciliation Court of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County is limited to divorce cases. Clients may be referred by legal personnel or may request counselling themselves, whether prior to or after the initiation of legal action. Conciliation "hearings" are carried out by a marriage counsellor in an informal atmosphere, and information disclosed during these sessions are legally protected from compulsory disclosure in other proceedings. If the couples decide to be reconciled, they may sign a "Reconciliation Agreement", a legal document in which the parties commit themselves to

their good intentions. The Conciliation Court has the power to enforce the parties' attendance at the conferences, and these signed legal agreements, but it cannot force reconciliation.

The Toledo and Los Angeles systems are regarded favourably by Reagh (1970) because these services help to reduce tensions and animosities between parties, as well as facilitating better arrangements for the children involved. The parties who decide to continue with court action are less likely to be adversaries in reality, and are able to proceed on the most expedient grounds toward a divorce. Two innovative laws, both made effective in California in 1970, and implemented by the Conciliation Court, are directed toward decreasing family breakdown. The first was the abolishment of the adversary approach in the dissolution of marriage, thereby removing the requirement that one party must be shown to be at fault. The second was the institution of a legal requirement for pre-marital counselling for couples in which one member is under age eighteen. The support of the community's counselling resources was enlisted in the implementation of this legislation.

3. Edmonton Family Court Conciliation Project

The Edmonton Family Court was a suitable setting for this demonstration project for several reasons. The city was small enough to allow for public acceptance and support of such an undertaking. The Family Court here was well-established, with suitable physical facilities and staff, and the proposed project had the support of the four Family Court judges, which was essential to its success.

Regarding the staffing of the project, the director emphasized the importance of two factors. First, in order to have a sufficiently realistic situation in this pilot project which could be applied to similar projects in future, the counsellors involved would not be professional

marriage counsellors. Few family courts in Canada have professionally-trained staff, nor are they likely to in the near future. Second, it was essential that the Project staff be integrated with that of the Family Court. This was achieved by the participation of some counsellors in both the Project and regular Family Court duties. Three of the nine Family Court counsellors were chosen to participate part-time in the Project, and one full-time counsellor was also hired. Because the counsellors had no previous formal training in marriage counselling, they received some training in areas of psychological theory relevant to marriage counselling, transactional analysis, medical and psychiatric information, as well as in counselling and interviewing techniques. This training was conducted by Mr. Franklin Bailey, who had recently retired from twelve years as senior marriage counsellor with the Los Angeles Conciliation Court, and had assumed the position of Project Consultant. The supervision of the counselling services was initially undertaken by the Chief Family Court Counsellor, who consequently served simultaneously as Chief Project Counsellor. According to the design of the Project, and its needs at the time, a Senior Project Counsellor was hired approximately a year after the Project began. This person was a social worker with much experience in marriage counselling, and he assumed many of the Project's supervisory responsibilities.

The counselling offered by the Project counsellors was intended to be brief, intensive and focussed on the disrupting crisis of the couple involved. It was, to some extent, diagnostic as well, since counsellors were required to refer clients with more serious legal, medical or psychological problems to the appropriate outside agencies. In the early interviews, the counsellor mainly gathered information. After this initial stage the client would either be referred to an outside agency, or further

discussion would proceed, with the counsellor attempting to help the couple to identify and analyze their problems. In the case of continuation of serious marital conflict at this stage, which was usual, the counsellor presented three options to the couple. First, continued separation or divorce may have been recommended where no other solution was feasible; second, clients with more serious problems may have agreed to be referred by the counsellor to appropriate outside agencies; or third, the parties may have agreed to undergo short-term counselling within the Project, with the purpose of reconciliation or continuing conciliation of differences.

The clientele of the Project was restricted to persons whose marital problems had led them to seek resolution by legal means. This group included recently separated couples who appeared in Family Court, and were thought by the judge to be reconcilable and expressed a willingness for counselling; those who had consulted, and had been referred by lawyers for conciliation or possible reconciliation; and those couples appearing before Supreme Court judges in divorce cases who may have been reconcilable, or required conciliation of differences. These were the only sources of referrals at the outset of the Project, although later in its operation, the Board of Directors authorized the acceptance of referrals from Legal Aid.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

1. The Sample

The initial total sample in this study consisted of 465 married couples, all of whom had been assumed to have attended at least one interview at the Edmonton Family Court Conciliation Project between November 16, 1972 and May 28, 1974. Their names and addresses were obtained from the Project records. However, the addresses of 95 individual clients had not been recorded, leaving 835 individuals for whom addresses were actually available, and to whom questionnaires were mailed. Of these, 85 questionnaires were returned by the postal system, marked as "unknown" and the names and addresses of these intended recipients were not obtainable through use of the telephone directory. Those questionnaires which were returned as "unknown", but for which addresses were subsequently found, were remailed. A number of clients informed the researcher by telephone or letter that they had not used the counselling services. This situation appeared to be due to the names of both spouses being recorded at the Conciliation Project upon referral, although in some cases only one, or neither, obtained counselling. Therefore, these individuals, numbering 36, also could not be considered to be a part of the study sample, and were subtracted from the initial total. Hence, the study sample, comprised of all individuals who, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, could be considered eligible to respond to the questionnaire, totalled 714.

The study sample was defined as all clients who could be contacted because the most complete and valid information regarding the clients' perceptions of the Conciliation Project was desired. The Project staff

had suggested that the clients tended to change residence frequently, largely because many of them were adapting to considerable changes in their domestic lives. For this reason, it was anticipated that a sizeable proportion of the potential respondents would be impossible to contact or would not bother to respond. Therefore, as many clients as possible were employed in the sample, with the purpose of avoiding sampling limits on the scope of data.

2. The Instrument

The items of the client questionnaire were designed to investigate two areas of importance: demographic data, such as age, sex, and length of marriage; and clients' attitudes regarding the services they received at the Conciliation Project. It was necessary to include questions designed to obtain basic demographic information about the clients because some of the Project records were incomplete in these areas.

The initial pool of topics from which questionnaire items were to be developed consisted of questions and areas of concern suggested by the principal evaluators, the research assistants, and the administrators and counsellors at the Conciliation Project. The questionnaire was designed with the purpose of gaining as much information as possible, while encouraging the lowest refusal rate possible. The construction and selection of items were based on the general guidelines of relevance and practicability (Moser, 1972). That is, they had direct relevance to the objectives of the study, and were worded such that respondents would be able to understand and answer them accurately. In addition, because respondents are less likely to answer long questionnaires, this instrument was made to be as brief as was practical.

The wording of the questions was of particular importance in this

case, since several staff members of the Project had suggested that a large proportion of the clients were poorly educated. Particular attention was paid to wording the items in such a way that they could be understood by people who had little schooling, and also avoiding the impression of condescension. Wherever possible, questions were framed in terms of the respondents' personal experience, and personal pronouns were used.

The effects of order of items on refusal rates and quality of information were also borne in mind in questionnaire construction. Moser (1972) points out that there is a strong temptation on the part of respondents "to mislead, to understate or exaggerate on subjects which are surrounded by strong social conventions" (p. 311). Questions which a respondent would be least likely to have difficulty or misgivings about answering were placed at the beginning of the questionnaire, and relatively sensitive topics, or items which might elicit inaccurate information, were placed near the end. Hence, should a respondent react to the more controversial questions by refusing to respond, or by giving inaccurate answers, less information would be lost than would be the case if he or she reacted in this way early in completing the questionnaire, and persisted throughout.

To measure the clients' attitudes toward the project services, an ordinal scale representing a hypothetical range of attitudes was employed in many of the questionnaire items. A Likert (1932) model was used in designing some of the items. That is, the respondent was asked to choose among seven response categories, indicating, for example, various amounts of satisfaction with counselling. Some of the items more closely resembled a semantic differential scale (Osgood, 1957), which employed a seven-point scale with bipolar adjectives (for example, rating counsellors on a warm-cold dimension). Both of these scales are called summated rating scales,

since a respondent's total score represents the measure of his attitude. Both of these scales are ordinal, hence no conclusions can be made regarding the meaning of the distances between scale positions.

Oppenheim (1966) draws attention to two major types of errors which rating scales with several scale points are prone to. These are errors of central tendancy, which refer to the tendancy for respondents to avoid marking the extremes of the scale; and the halo effect, meaning that respondents tend to answer each item according to their general impressions, rather than according to the meaning of the individual item. However, such scales have advantages in this type of study because they are simply and quickly answered, require little effort on the part of the respondent, and avoid verbal bias to a greater extent than do questions not using a numbered scale.

An attempt was made to measure the success of the scale in measuring the clients' attitudes toward the services they received at the Conciliation Project as it was intended. The scale is assumed to have face validity because the items are consistently aimed at acquiring information relevant to the clients' attitudes toward the Project. Copies of the final form of the questionnaire were submitted to the major evaluators and to the Project counsellors for their assessment of the instrument's content validity, which, as Moser (1972) suggests, is essentially a matter of judgement. In addition, one of the purposes of the pilot study was to ascertain, on the basis of the sample of responses received, whether the meaning and purposes of the items were understood by the respondents. To estimate the extent to which clients understood the items of the questionnaire as they were designed to be interpreted, a small sample of clients who stated that they were willing to answer further questions were

interviewed in person by the researcher.

3. Administration of the Questionnaire

Mailed questionnaires proved to be a more favourable method of gathering information from clients than other approaches. Because it was necessary to use as large a sample of respondents as possible, and because many of these people were difficult to contact, mailed questionnaires were the most convenient method. Attempts to interview such a sample would be likely to yield a large proportion of noncontacts, due to people having moved or not being at home. Furthermore, some of the topics of the inquiry tended to be of a personal and sensitive nature, and the respondents might be less willing to discuss these matters with an interviewer than to answer items on a relatively anonymous questionnaire. This assumption of the need for anonymity was reinforced by the large proportion of rather hostile reactions by clients to being identified with this service which were received during the pilot project telephone follow-up. The advantage of enabling the respondent to consider his responses more carefully than he is able to in an interview situation may also augment the quality of the information acquired from clients (Moser, 1972).

Perhaps the largest drawback of mailed questionnaires is that their response rates tend to be low. As Oppenheim (1966) points out, this does not represent a problem because of a loss of subjects in a sample. Rather, the problem lies in the likelihood that nonrespondents differ significantly from respondents in important ways, and conclusions based on the information gathered from the latter group are, therefore, biased. It must also be considered in this study that those clients who could not be contacted by mail constitute a group of appreciable size, and that they may differ significantly from those individuals who were contacted. The questionnaires

were also completed under nonstandard conditions; that is, each respondent answered the same questionnaire in different environments. The researcher cannot, in fact, be certain in all cases that the person to whom the questionnaire was addressed was the one who actually completed it.

Accompanying the mailed questionnaires were covering letters, one signed by the main evaluators and one signed by the project counsellors. These letters explained the purpose and importance of the study and the questionnaires. The respondents were assured of the anonymity of their completed forms, and were instructed not to sign their names. The respondent was not required to refold the questionnaire in order to return it in the stamped, addressed envelope which was enclosed.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was undertaken for two main reasons: to assess whether the questionnaire items and instructions seemed to be understood by the respondents, and to estimate the return rate of questionnaires which could be expected in the main part of the study. The effect of various follow-up procedures on the return rate was also of interest.

The pilot study consisted of mailing a questionnaire to 21 individuals and their spouses for a sample size of 42. Each questionnaire was accompanied by the standard covering letters. As many as possible of the clients from whom completed questionnaires were not received were contacted by telephone, and they were asked to return the completed forms. A second copy of the questionnaire was sent to each of the nonrespondents as well.

Main Project

Questionnaires, letters and return envelopes were mailed to a total of 793 individuals. As many as possible of the names of the clients whose

envelopes were returned marked "unknown" were found in the telephone directory, and the questionnaires were remailed to the new addresses. Picture post cards bearing a handwritten message reminding the clients to return their completed forms as soon as possible were sent to all nonrespondents as a follow-up. The large sample size prohibited the use of the follow-up procedure of telephoning nonrespondents in this phase of the study.

4. The Counsellor Questionnaire

A questionnaire to be completed by the Project counsellors was constructed with the purpose of gaining an understanding of their attitudes toward the functioning of the Project. The areas of concern which were to be investigated included their opinions regarding the benefit derived by clients from the counselling provided, the strengths and weaknesses of the Project, how the relationships between counsellors and administrators were perceived by counsellors, and their recommendations for change. This list of questions noted some of the areas of concern which had been discussed by the participants in the Project and the evaluation, and the counsellors were asked to respond to these as they saw fit. It was important, however, that it was not unduly structured, to allow the respondents to answer according to their interpretations, and to supplement the original questions as they deemed necessary to give as complete and accurate a description as possible.

5. Analysis of the Data

Information gathered from the client questionnaire in the pilot and main projects was combined and treated as one body of data in the analysis. The information dealt with here was drawn from the results of clients' responses to selected items. Some of the questionnaire items were included

to gather data for the larger evaluation project, and were not pertinent to the specific objectives of this study.

The distribution of the target population in relation to demographic variables was analyzed by frequency tabulation, and was illustrated in tables displaying both actual frequencies and percentages in the various categories. The differences between the groups of respondents reporting "more satisfaction" and "less satisfaction" were analyzed using a chi square procedure.

The client's satisfaction with the services he or she received was represented by the summation of the scores indicated on items 9, 12, and 14. The relationship of the client variables to the amount of satisfaction with services received was analyzed using Yule's Q and gamma. The statistic Q was applied in cases where data could be displayed in 2 X 2 tables, and gamma was applied to the R X C tables.

A collection of additional comments which were added to the questionnaires by clients were reported in Appendix C.

The information obtained from the counsellors' questionnaires was not amenable to statistical analysis, and instead was summarized according to topic.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

1. Introduction

The statistical results of the completion of the questionnaire by a portion of the clients who received counselling at the Project are compiled in this chapter. Also, the nonstatistical results of the questionnaire which was completed by the Project counsellors are summarized.

The total number of questionnaires which were completed and returned by clients was 199, or about 28 percent of the total number of clients who were assumed to be eligible to respond to the questionnaire. The results reported here may be assumed to represent the characteristics and attitudes of the respondents only. These data may not be treated as representative of all of the clients who received counselling at the Project. However, circumspect interpretation of the trends indicated for the group of respondents provided some information about the people who have used the Project services, although the limitations of extrapolating from the known data to the larger population were borne in mind.

2. Characteristics of the Respondents

An effort was made to involve both spouses in counselling at the Project, on the part of both the referring party and the counsellor involved. Of the total number of clients who responded to the questionnaire, 89, or 44.7 per cent, were male and 110, or 55.3 per cent, were female (See Table II).

TABLE II

PERCENTAGES OF MALES AND FEMALES
IN SAMPLE RESPONDING
TO QUESTIONNAIRE

Sex	No. of Respondents	Per Cent of Total Respondents	Per Cent of Total Sample
Male	89	44.7	12.5
Female	110	55.3	15.4
Total Number of Respondents	199	100.0	27.9
Total Number of Clients in Sample	714		

In Table III, it is shown that 38.7 per cent of the respondents were under the age of thirty. These figures might be cautiously interpreted to roughly approximate the distribution of individuals coming to the Project. They may suggest that over one-third of the clients who have encountered marital and domestic difficulty of sufficient severity as to cause them to seek legal recourse and to be referred for help to the Project, are age 29 or younger. The largest single age group of respondents was that between ages 30 and 39, that is, 30.2 per cent of the total number of respondents. Over half of the respondents (52.3 per cent) were between the ages of 30 and 49.

TABLE III

PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS,
CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO AGE

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents
21 or younger	5	2.5
22 - 29	72	36.2
30 - 39	60	30.2
40 - 49	44	22.1
50 or older	18	9.0
	199	100.0 per cent

Many of the respondents to the questionnaire reported their marriages to have been of relatively short duration. Over one-third (35.6 per cent) of these individuals had been married five years or less, and over half of them (53.7 per cent) reported that their marriages, at the time of receiving counselling at the Project, had lasted nine years or less (see Table IV). Cautious interpretation of these data implies that an appreciable number of married couples are experiencing serious marital discord relatively early in their marriages.

TABLE IV

PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO LENGTH OF MARRIAGE

Length of Marriage	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents
Less than 1 year	3	1.5
1 - 2 years	16	8.0
3 - 5 years	52	26.1
6 - 9 years	36	18.1
10 - 15 years	40	20.1
16 - 21 years	25	12.6
22 years or more	27	13.6
	199	100.0 per cent

Of the total number of 199 respondents, close to half of them, or 45.2 per cent, reported that they had sought counselling from other sources prior to their referral to the Project. Although the original questionnaire item did not specify the nature of the previous counselling (that is, whether this represented the individual's attempt to solve his marital problems, or whether help of another type had been sought), these data suggest that these clients had recognized their need for outside help in solving their problems, and had taken some action, before becoming involved in the legal processes. However, a pitfall in this interpretation is that individuals who seek counselling before beginning divorce action may be those who are better informed (since they are aware of agencies which offer such help), and well-informed people are more likely to complete and return questionnaires than are less informed people (Wallace, 1954).

A substantial number of the respondents reported having large families (see Table V). Of the total number of clients who completed and returned the questionnaires, 41.8 per cent of them said they had three or more children, and about a quarter of them (24.2 per cent) had four or more. Only seven per cent of them reported having no children.

TABLE V

PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Number of Children	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents
none	14	7.0
one	28	14.0
two	74	37.2
three	35	17.6
four	23	11.6
five or more	25	12.6
	199	100.0 per cent

The data seemed to indicate that most of the people who returned the questionnaire had been married only once. Only 5.5 per cent of the respondents reported having been married more than once, and none of them said they had been married three or more times.

3. Clients' Reported Satisfaction

The amount of satisfaction reported by a client was represented by the sum of the individual's scores on questionnaire items 9, 12 and 14. For this analysis, the 199 cases were divided into two categories, designated as those reporting "more satisfaction" and "less satisfaction".

The midpoint of the distribution of sums, 12.5, was arbitrarily chosen as the dividing point, half of the cases having sums of 12 being placed in either category. Hence, one category is represented by sums of between 3 and 12.5 inclusive, and the other by sums of 12.5 to 21 inclusive.

The numbers of respondents reporting "more satisfaction" and "less satisfaction" with counselling at the Project are illustrated in Table VI. The value of chi square is 52.28, which is highly significant at the .0001 level. These results seemed to indicate that of those clients who returned their questionnaires, there were many more who reported satisfaction than dissatisfaction with the counselling they received at the Project. These data might be interpreted as indicating a generally positive attitude on the part of clients toward counselling at the Project. However, certain limitations are placed upon such a conclusion, since it is possible that clients who felt that the Project's services had benefited them tended to return the questionnaires more often than did those who were dissatisfied.

TABLE VI

FREQUENCY OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING GREATER AND LESS SATISFACTION

Score	Observed	Expected	O-E	$(O-E)^2$	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
3-12.5	150.5	99.5	51	2601	26.14
12.5-21	48.5	99.5	-51	2601	26.14

Chi square = 52.28

Questionnaire item 9 was worded as a direct inquiry of the clients' satisfaction with counselling at the Conciliation Project. The clients' responses to this item alone were analyzed using a chi square procedure, in order to determine whether the results of the items 9, 12 and 14 were

consistent with those of this item. The value of chi square was found to be 28.26, which suggested that the three combined items were measuring much the same thing as was item 9 alone.

4. Client Variables and Amount of Satisfaction

The conventions set forth by Davis (1971), were employed in describing the values of Q and gamma. Hence, values between +.01 and +.09 indicated a negligible positive association; between +.10 and +.29 was a low positive association; between +.30 and +.49 was a moderate positive association; and so forth. A similar pattern was observed for negative correlations.

As before, the sum of questionnaire items 9, 12 and 14 represented a client's amount of satisfaction. However, in the following procedures, and to simplify the analysis, the cases in which the scores summed to 12 were included in the category of "more satisfaction".

In Table VII, the frequencies are shown of males and females reporting greater or less satisfaction with the services received at the Project. In this case, Q equals -0.01, which is a negligible negative correlation between sex and amount of satisfaction. This suggested that a respondent's sex had little to do with the amount of satisfaction which he or she reported.

TABLE VII

SEX AND AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS

	Amount of Satisfaction		
	Greater Satisfaction	Less Satisfaction	
Sex	(12 or less)	(13 or more)	
Male	69	20	89
Female	85	25	110
	154	45	199

Shown in Table VIII is the amount of satisfaction with counselling received at the Project as reported by the clients who responded to the questionnaire, classified according to age. The value of gamma is -0.03, which indicates a negligible negative correlation between these variables, suggesting that the amount of satisfaction reported by clients was not associated with the age group which they were in.

TABLE VIII

AGE GROUP AND AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS

	Age in Years				
Amount of Satisfaction	29 or Less	30-39	40-49	50 or over	
Less Satisfaction (13 or more)	18	15	7	4	44
More Satisfaction (12 or less)	58	46	37	14	155
	76	61	44	18	199

The amounts of satisfaction reported by respondents who received counselling before coming to the Project, and that reported by those respondents who did not do so, are shown in Table IX. In this case, Q equals -0.26, a low negative correlation between receiving prior counselling and amount of satisfaction. The implication of these data is that those clients who did not receive previous counselling had a slight tendency to report greater satisfaction with the counselling they received at the Project.

TABLE IX

PREVIOUS COUNSELLING AND AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS

Amount of Satisfaction	Received Counselling Previously	Did Not Receive Counselling Previously	
Less Satisfaction (13 or more)	16	28	44
More Satisfaction (12 or less)	76	79	155
	92	107	199

The satisfaction with counselling reported by the respondents when classified according to how long they had been married when they came to the Project is shown in Table X. The value of gamma is -0.45, which indicates a moderate negative association between amount of satisfaction and length of marriage. This suggests a tendency for clients who had been married for a relatively short time to report greater satisfaction than did those who had been married for a longer time.

TABLE X

LENGTH OF MARRIAGE AND AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS

Amount of Satisfaction	Length of Marriage: 2 yrs. or less	3-5 yrs.	6-9 yrs.	10-15 yrs.	16 yrs. or more	
Less Sat. (13 or more)	6	15	6	10	8	45
More Sat. (12 or less)	13	37	30	30	44	154
	19	52	36	40	52	199

In Table XI, the respondents' satisfaction and the number of children they had are shown. The value of gamma is -0.31, which indicates a moderate negative correlation between these variables, which implies that the individuals with relatively few children reported greater satisfaction with counselling at the Project, while people with more children tended to be less satisfied.

TABLE XI

NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS

Amount of Satisfaction	Number of Children: None	One	Two	Three	Four or more	
Less Sat. (13 or more)	4	9	17	6	9	45
More Sat. (12 or less)	10	19	57	29	39	154
	14	28	74	35	48	199

The Counsellor's Attitudes

Six counsellors were asked to complete questionnaires which were designed to gather information about their attitudes toward the Project. This included two counsellors who were no longer employed with the Project, one who left soon after it began, and one who left shortly before this questionnaire was submitted. Four of these individuals completed and returned the questionnaire, and one wrote a letter describing his opinions because the original format of the questionnaire was inapplicable in his case. A summary of the views expressed by the counsellors follows:

In response to an item regarding the training they received from the Project Consultant, Mr. Bailey, all of the counsellors referred to the basic framework employed, that of Transactional Analysis. They seemed to agree that this training provided a good preparation for the duties they later assumed. However, two of them said that they would have preferred more practical experience combined with the theory they had learned, in the form of observation of actual counselling sessions, and case studies. One counsellor objected to the high degree of structure in the training, and thought approaches in addition to Transactional Analysis ought to have been discussed. However, another said that the training period was neither rigid nor dogmatic, and had proven very useful to that individual.

The counsellors responded to a question regarding their "experience and training" with descriptions of past job experience, but formal educational qualifications were seldom mentioned. Because all of the counsellors had Bachelor's degrees, or equavelent formal education, this suggested that the counsellors considered their practical experiences as being more relevant than was their formal schooling to their roles as Project counsellors.

All of the counsellors saw their purposes and goals to be to help clients to recognize the realities of their problems, to help them to make responsible decisions, and to refer them to appropriate community agencies for further help, if needed. Counsellors were asked to estimate how many clients benefited from counselling at the Project and to what extent. The consensus was that most, if not all of the clients, received some benefit from their experiences at the Project. They rejected the idea that some clients might be harmed, rather than helped, but one counsellor indicated that some may not be particularly affected by counselling in any way.

The counsellors agreed that close physical proximity of the Project to the Family Court was essential to providing good service to the clients. Such an arrangement provided continuity of services between the two facilities, and enabled the Project services to be made available to individuals very quickly. A sharing of resources and expertise between the Family Court and the Project was also possible, as well as providing a basis for the development of viable working relationships and rapport between the two staffs. However, the counsellors also seemed to agree that the administrative ties between the Family Court and the Project ought to be loosened. One counsellor suggested that the fact that some counsellors had both Family Court and Project duties was a less than ideal situation, since Family Court responsibilities often had priority over those of the Project.

It was generally agreed that close professional relationships with lawyers was of great importance in providing an effective service to the clients. One counsellor emphasized, however, that the clients were the intended beneficiaries, and the Project's purpose was not to facilitate

the lawyers' work.

The counsellors' responses suggested a generally high level of job satisfaction. They reported good relationships with co-workers and said that other counsellors were often consulted when uncertainties arose in their counselling duties. They also seemed to regard the Senior Project Counsellor, the Chief Court Counsellor, and, to some extent, the Project Consultant, as being very approachable and helpful. However, the nature of the administrative structure of the Family Court and the Project placed numerous responsibilities with the position of Chief Court Counsellor, and he was sometimes not immediately available when his services were demanded in the Project. The counsellors' freedom to innovate in their jobs was seen as limited, and some frustration with the perceived rigidity of the prescribed policies and procedures was expressed. The counsellors also mentioned that it was difficult to discuss changes they deemed desirable through official channels such as staff meetings. The Project Director was regarded, in some cases, as being rather rigid and unapproachable in her insistence that the policies and procedures be followed religiously. However, the Director's help was also recognized, especially in areas such as problems with negative reactions from lawyers and in facilitating communication with the Supreme Court.

The strong point of the Project upon which there was unanimous agreement was the availability of immediate help from counsellors to individuals referred by the Family Court. The counsellors seemed to take their roles in crisis intervention very seriously, and saw the immediate availability of help to people in distress as crucial. The close association with the legal and court system enabled the counsellors to be well-versed in such matters, and to contribute substantially to their clients' understanding

of what was happening to them in the often strange and confusing situation of the lawyer's office and the courtroom. Good rapport with community agencies was also mentioned as an asset of the Project services, as well as the support from many lawyers and judges. The group counselling which was introduced later in the Project was seen as advantageous, as was the fact that the counselling services were free of charge.

Most of the counsellors reported that lack of teamwork and cohesiveness among them was an important limitation in the Project. This seemed to be attributed to the fact that several Project counsellors also had heavy responsibilities in their Family Court positions. It was also mentioned that the Board of Directors had little contact with the Project on a practical level, and the facilities were inadequate in that counselling sessions could sometimes be heard by people outside of the rooms. Also regarded as a limitation by one counsellor was the nonavailability of the Project's services to clients who have not become involved in the legal system, and another counsellor stated that the Project, in practice, seemed less oriented toward the needs of the clients than toward the needs of the lawyers.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATION, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Interpretation and Summary

A large proportion of the clients who responded to the mailed questionnaire were relatively young and had been married for a short time. This finding may be related to a greater tendency for younger people to return questionnaires. However, it also emphasizes the need for outside help with problems that arise early in many marriages. Few of these conflicts which bring couples into contact with the legal system are purely marital matters. The data suggest that children are involved in most of the cases, and many of them are likely to be quite young, and so totally dependent upon their parents. Hence, there seems to be a very real need for a service which aims to reduce the emotional toll of marriage breakdown, partly through offering help in making sensible and specific arrangements for the future welfare and maintenance of the children involved.

Approximately half of the respondents reported receiving counselling prior to coming to the Conciliation Project. Although there probably exists a bias such that those individuals who return questionnaires are also more likely to seek counselling the results also suggest that in addition to the existing services provided by community agencies, the Project's crisis-intervention services which focussed on marriage breakdown were also fulfilling a need.

Regarding the respondents' attitudes toward the Project, the data were interpreted such that significantly more of them reported satisfaction than dissatisfaction with the Conciliation Project's counselling services.

Again, the limitation of the relatively small proportion of the total sample of individuals for whom information was available necessitates caution in interpretation. Perhaps those who were less satisfied were among those who failed to return the questionnaire, but the available data suggest a favourable attitude toward the Project on the part of clients who have used its services. There appeared to be some tendency for greater satisfaction to be reported more frequently by those clients who had been married a relatively short period of time. Bearing in mind the inherent biases, this may have suggested that the marital problems presented by people who have been married a shorter time are less deeply ingrained than are those of clients who had been married longer, and hence, are more amenable to positive change. The basis for the tendency of individuals with fewer children to report greater satisfaction than did those with more children was obscure.

The information supplied by the counsellors suggested that their goals were congruent with the stated organizational goals. They perceived the Project's close physical proximity to the Family Court as highly advantageous to providing adequate services for their clients. This was partly because the Project was enabled to provide immediate service to individuals referred by the Family Court. The counsellors seemed committed to meeting the needs of the clients as well as possible, and job satisfaction appeared generally high. However, the organization of the Project may have been rather rigid, in that it did not provide for adequate vertical communication between counsellors and administrators, with some frustration on the part of the counsellors because it was difficult for them to discuss and implement innovations. The effective functioning of the Project may have been limited to some extent by a lack of teamwork

among counsellors, which appears partially attributable to the dual responsibilities, and consequently limited time, of counsellors who worked in both the Family Court and the Project.

2. Recommendations

1. In the future operation of the Edmonton Family Court Conciliation Project, its close physical proximity to the Family Court should be maintained. The advantages of such an arrangement in providing a basis for the sharing of information and expertise has been cited in the literature, and was also mentioned by the Project counsellors. In addition, the almost immediate availability of a counsellor to people referred by the Family Court was perceived by the counsellors as a very beneficial part of this service. Close physical proximity of the two facilities is essential in order to maintain this advantage.

   It is suggested, however, that counsellors have job responsibilities in either the Family Court or the Project, but not in both. As indicated in the literature, the sharing of responsibilities by counsellors had been included in the Project's organizational structure at its outset for the purpose of providing a basis for the integration of the two services. However, the counsellors indicated that having dual responsibilities was not conducive to carrying out their duties as well as they might. In view of such a change, and of the comments made by the counsellors, organizational changes to provide for better communication among counsellors, and between counsellors and administrators, will be necessary. Such measures would entail greater emphasis on the function of the Senior Project Counsellor and

the Chief Court Counsellor in encouraging cooperation and communication among the counsellors in the two facilities, through procedures such as regular inservice training sessions.

2. Further financial and organizational provisions should be made for an ongoing and systematic evaluation throughout the Project's functioning. The primary purpose of evaluation of a service such as this is to provide feedback to enable the organization to make appropriate adjustments to enhance its usefulness and efficiency. The relevance of evaluation research depends to a great extent upon the availability of basic reliable data, and a greater commitment on the part of the organization to an ongoing evaluation might make such information more readily available than it was at the beginning of this study. For example, information such as clients' ages and length of marriage would have been very useful in this study in defining the sample prior to sending the questionnaires. The literature also indicates that the attitudes of clients and counsellors of services such as this are infrequently used in evaluation. The ideas and insights of those who are directly involved are an important source of information for the evaluator, and ought to be utilized in future evaluation studies.

3. The literature suggests that the number of counsellors in Canada who have had professional training in marriage and family counselling falls far short of the number required. At present, there are few places in Alberta where a counsellor is able to obtain it. It is suggested that universities in Alberta offer post-graduate courses dealing specifically with marriage and

family counselling, possibly of an interdisciplinary nature, which would be available to both counsellors in training and to professional helpers whose jobs require expertise in this area. Greater university involvement in such education would hopefully have the effect of providing counsellors with more skills to help couples cope better with their conflicts before crises arise and family breakdown becomes inevitable.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Client Questionnaire

We are asking you to answer these questions because we would like to find out what you thought about the counselling program at the Family Court Conciliation Project. Please do not sign you name.

Please circle the correct answer:

1. What is your sex?
   a. male
   b. female
2. Who asked for counselling?
   a. your husband or wife
   b. yourself
   c. both husband and wife together
3. How old were you when you saw your counsellor at the Conciliation Project?
   a. 21 years or younger
   b. 22 - 29 years
   c. 30 - 39 years
   d. 40 - 49 years
   e. 50 years or older
4. How old was your husband or wife at the time of counselling?
   a. 21 years or younger
   b. 22 - 29 years
   c. 30 - 39 years
   d. 40 - 49 years
   e. 50 years or older
5. Before coming to the Conciliation Project, had you been to another counsellor?
   a. yes
   b. no

Were you satisfied with the other counselling?

Very satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very dissatisfied

6. How long had you been married when you came for counselling at the Conciliation Project?

   a. less than one year

   b. 1 - 2 years

   c. 3 - 5 years

   d. 6 - 9 years

   e. 10 - 15 years

   f. 16 - 21 years

   g. 22 years or more

7. How many times did you and your husband or wife talk with your counsellor together?

   a. we did not talk to the counsellor together

   b. once

   c. 2 times

   d. 3 times

   e. 4 times

   f. 5 times or more

8. How many times did you talk to your counsellor alone?

   a. you did not talk to your counsellor alone at any time

   b. once

   c. 2 times

   d. 3 times

   e. 4 times

   f. 5 times or more

9. Were you satisfied with the counselling at the Conciliation Project?

Very satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very dissatisfied

10. How many children do you have?

a. none

b. one

c. two

d. three

e. four

f. five or more

11. Was the counsellor that you talked to:

very sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not at all sensitive

very understanding 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not at all understanding

very helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not at all helpful

very respectful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not at all respectful

warm 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 cold

12. Would you want to talk over any problems with this counsellor again?

certainly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 certainly not

13. Did the age of the counsellor bother you?

a. yes

b. no

any comments:

14. Would you recommend this service to a friend?

certainly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 certainly not

15. Did counselling help you to finally decide what to do about your marriage problems?

helped very much 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 did not help at all

16. How many times has husband been married?

a. once

b. twice

c. three times or more

How many times has wife been married?

a. once

b. twice

c. three times or more

17. A "marriage agreement" may have been given to you to read when you came for counselling. This may have been a booklet about marriage vows and about some of the things that wives and husbands do that make others happy or unhappy.

Do you remember reading one of these agreements?

a. yes

b. no

Did it help you to talk about your problems more easily?

a. yes

b. no

c. you do not remember reading one of these

18. You may also have seen a "problem checklist". This list showed some problems that you might have had in your marriage. You were asked to check what you thought your marriage problems were, and what you thought your husband or wife would say.

Do you remember reading one of these checklists?

a. yes

b. no

Did it help you to talk about your problems more easily?

a. yes

b. no

c. you do not remember seeing one of these

19. Additional comments:

APPENDIX B

Counsellor Questionnaire

1. Briefly describe the training which you received for this position with Mr. Bailey. To what extent did it help you to become a more effective counsellor? Did you feel adequately prepared when you began your job as a project counsellor?

2. What work experience or training in your background help you as a counsellor at the Conciliation Project?

3. What are the purposes and goals of a counsellor at the Project, as you see them?

4. Please indicate how many clients who obtain counselling at the Project, in your opinion, fall into each category:

   a. Benefit very much from counselling at the Project?
      (i) none of them
      (ii) some of them
      (iii) most of them
      (iv) all of them

   b. Obtain some benefit from counselling at the Project?

      (i) none of them
      (ii) some of them
      (iii) most of them
      (iv) all of them

   c. Are neither helped nor harmed?

      (i) none of them
      (ii) some of them
      (iii) most of them
      (iv) all of them

   d. Are harmed, rather than helped?

      (i) none of them
      (ii) some of them
      (iii) most of them
      (iv) all of them

5. To what extent do you feel a close association of the Project with the Family Court is important in providing effective service to the Project's clients? (that is, both physical proximity of the offices and administrative relationships).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. To what extent do you feel a close association with lawyers is important in providing an effective service to the clients and the community?

7. To what extent have you found the "problem checklist" and the "marriage agreement" to be useful to you in facilitating more effective counselling with your clients?

8. Please discuss your satisfaction with your job as a project counsellor, as related to factors such as:

   (a) your relationship with those who administer the Project;

   (b) your freedom to innovate;

   (c) your freedom to discuss issues and problems with

      (i) administrators

      (ii) co-workers;

   (d) your freedom in personal behavior at work, such as your dress and appearance.

8. (cont)_____

9. The major influence in your work with clients is:

   (a) other counsellors;

   (b) the Senior Project counsellor;

   (c) the Chief Court Counsellor;

   (d) the Project Director;

   (e) combination of these (please indicate which)

   _____

   _____

   (f) other (please indicate what these influences are)

   _____

   _____

10. When you experience difficulty in your work with clients, you first consult:

   (a) other counsellors;

   (b) the Senior Project Counsellor;

   (c) the Chief Court Counsellor;

   (d) the Project Director;

   (e) the combination of these (please indicate which)

   _____

   _____

   (f) other (please indicate who this is)

   _____

11. When you experience difficulty with a non-client related situation at work (such as conflict with co-workers or administrative problems), you first consult:

    (a) other counsellors;

    (b) the Senior Project Counsellor;

    (c) the Chief Court Counsellor;

    (d) the Project Director;

    (e) combination of these (please indicate which)

    _____

    _____

    (f) other (please indicate who this is)

    _____

    _____

12. In your opinion, what are the strong points of the services provided to clients by the Conciliation Project?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

13. In your opinion, what are the weaknesses and limitations of the services provided to clients by the Conciliation Project?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

14. What changes would you recommend to make this service more beneficial to clients?

15. Additional comments:

APPENDIX C

Clients' Comments

The following comments regarding the Project were written by clients on the questionnaires which they completed and returned.

> I only went there to settle the money arrangements for my child, and there was the suggestions that my husband and I get back together. I was not interested nor will I ever be interested in that. Your counselling in our case was a waste of your time and mine.
>
> I felt the counsellor's approach was very positive and would have been very helpful, but unfortunately my husband has intense psychological problems which seem to make it impossible for him to accept the kind of help that was being offered.
>
> A very good service.
>
> If divorce is inevitable, I belive this type of counselling does help to remove the feeling of futility and bitterness.
>
> I feel if we would have been made to take further counselling we might have been able to make our marriage work.
>
> I regret not having gone to a counsellor sooner. It may have saved the marriage, almost certain.
>
> The FCCP, the way it is presently being operated, is useless. They for the most part have no power, legal or otherwise, and the two workers I worked with had no more knowledge of the court system than I had.
>
> The counsellor helped us a great deal with our own personal and marital problems.
>
> I did not feel that we were devoted enough time with the counsellor to discuss our problems or our solutions. I feel more time should be spent with couples before decisions are made.
>
> This counselling would have helped our marriage a great deal but our problem was beyond the help of this particular kind of counselling.

I believe that this service can be of great help to some people, providing they are fortunate enough to see the proper counsellor who has the ability to deal with both sides of the situation.

We did not want marriage counselling but were subjected to several hours about the role of wife and mother in the marriage. We did receive some advice and information regarding child custody and settlement after much needless other counselling as we had been through all that before at another counsellor.

Without this help we would have ended our marriage. The Project showed us exactly what we have going for ourselves as man and wife.

Overall, I think the program is a good one and well worth pursuing. Unfortunately, it did not really help our marriage but I attribute more of this to me personally than to the counselling program.

I do not feel that our counsellor solved all of our problems, but he certainly opened our eyes to a lot of things that neither of us were aware of.

The counselling we received made us aware of our problems and how to solve them. My husband is now taking psychiatric treatment and hopefully we will find a happy life together.

Its a good program and more troubled couples should have the opportunity to take advantage of it.

We both found the Project very helpful and wish we were living closer to a counsellor.

It made us realize that we werent' letting each other grow and develop ourselves as individuals in our marriage. Now we are able to communicate our needs and feelings and I feel we are the better for it.

I found this counselling very helpful, however, my husband was against having any type of help. The counsellors were as helpful as possible under these conditions.

The counselling cannot solve our problems, but made us aware of what they were and how to work on them. The group project was very helpful and I'm very glad we were allowed to participate in it.

It would be more helpful if the counselling was done much earlier in a marriage before problems become too deep-seated.

The counsellor did nothing to encourage that this marriage continue, in fact, indicated the opposite. I did not like her attitude toward me and felt she was very biased.

Most couples with marriage problems hesitate to go to professional counsellors because of the cost involved.

This is the first followup I have had in 1 1/2 years. Wouldn't it be a good idea to speak to the people while things are still fresh in their minds? Unfortunately I'm very bitter about your project. Hope you've had more success with others.

I was extremely impressed with the Conciliation Project. The methods used, in the way of immediate, short-term and to-the-point counselling are the better points and also helpful when a situation becomes a crisis.

I think it would be more profitable to the couple involved if there could be more sessions individually with the counsellor.

I feel that both the counsellors and the courts tended to sympathize with the wife. This, despite the fact that I was the complainant in the case.

The FCCP is very necessary for troubled marriages, for couples who really want to save their marriages, but cannot afford a private counsellor.

Breaking up a home is really going through hell, but if we get groups like the Conciliation Project to explain and talk to couples we can handle it different.

The aim of the court was quoted as being "to close the book gently" if reconciliation wasn't reached. I feel this area isn't really handled at all as there seemed to be no follow-up once I made the decision to let my husband go.

The counsellor figured he knew everything and did not listen too much. He did not recommend, but instead told.

I think I emerged from counselling somewhat more satisfied that my decision to file for divorce was the only thing for me to do if I was to maintain my integrity as a person. My only criticism of the service would be that I feel that the counsellor should not be asked to take telephone calls or be called into another office while he or she may be engaged in counselling with individuals.

A counsellor just tells you the way things should be - the right way. Ninety-nine per-cent of the people know the right way but its just trying to make the right things work, which is up to the two individuals.

I felt ten years ago I would have liked to have had someone like this to talk to as I felt we could have really used counselling. This counselling has definitely helped us on how to go about communicating and letting each other know our feelings without hurting each other so much.

The counsellor was in too much of a hurry to get us out of the door when he realized our marriage was finished.

Saw two counsellors, both very ritualized in approach - superficial problem solving format. Service may be OK for very concrete problems or naive couples, but little value for issues concerning relationship breakdown.

The counsellor was extremely aggressive and expected me to do exactly as she thought was best. I did not feel that she understood the bind I was in.

I was very impressed with our counsellor. She remained neutral and seemed to try not to impose her personality on our problems, while still managing to give value judgements.

I believe many couples have alcohol based problems, but this isn't understood there, and so one is left with only skimming over the smaller issues. I was also disappointed when we had to change counsellors three times.

I would rather have had specific counselling for our case instead of just listening to the counsellor talk about how marriages should be and could be but offering no way of achieving this goal. The sessions could have been a good stepping-off point for more in-depth counselling in areas where we really needed it. As it was I thought it was a waste of time.